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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000407

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STATE FOR EUR/CE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [MASS](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: JANSKA COULD TURN BRIBERY ALLEGATION TO HIS
ADVANTAGE IN RUN-UP TO ELECTION

Classified By: Amb. Yousif B. Ghafari, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. The September 1 Finnish TV program accusing PM Janez Jansa of accepting a bribe of up to 21 million euros in connection with the Slovenian Ministry of Defense 258 million euro deal to buy 135 Finnish Patria armored motorized vehicles (AMVs) has started a firestorm in Slovenia in the run-up to national elections on September 21. PM Jansa has repeatedly denied the accusations flat-out, attributing them to a pre-election smear campaign. While one might expect such explosive allegations to hurt Jansa politically, many Slovenes seem to have the opposite reaction: they see Jansa as a victim. Jansa's camp has aggressively cultivated this perception, and it is still too early to tell whether the allegations will help or hurt the incumbent. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) The Patria scandal has dominated the media and public discourse this week. We expect the spotlight to stay focused on this issue, despite PM Jansa's call to focus on what political parties are offering for the future of Slovenia. One Slovene lamented that this had looked to be Slovenia's first election that would focus on real issues and not on the past (i.e., who were partisans or collaborators in World War II), but that the scandal was now preventing Slovenes from looking to the future.

13. (C) Slovenes disagree on the impact of the accusations. At a September 3 luncheon hosted by the Ambassador, top Slovene business leaders agreed that the allegations would have an impact, but disagreed as to whether it would help or hurt Jansa. Given the lack of hard evidence, many believe the accusations could actually help PM Jansa and his party, the Slovene Democratic Party (SDS), due to the perception that he is being unfairly targeted. In a September 3 conversation with the Ambassador, even Jansa's main rival for the post of PM, Social Democrat leader Borut Pahor, hesitated to criticize his opponent over the scandal or predict what impact the allegations might have. In an informal conversation with journalists on September 5, we were told that absent a smoking gun, Jansa is likely to benefit from the perception that he is being treated unfairly. However, if documentary evidence surfaces in the last two weeks of the campaign, Jansa will suffer. One journalist compared it to the Lockheed scandal that brought down the Tanaka government in Japan in 1976.

14. (C) Conspiracy theories abound, including one that General Dynamics, which also bid on the AMV deal, stood to gain if the contract were annulled, and so could be behind the accusations. The Finnish journalist has refused to reveal the evidence of his accusations, which the TV station stands behind, saying the evidence would be produced in February/March when the Finnish police bring

the case to court. On September 4, the Finnish Ambassador told the Ambassador that FM Rupel had pressed her on the issue. The Slovene Parliament plans to hold an extraordinary session the week of September 8 on the matter. Many Slovene politicians have told us that that session could be decisive in the minds of many voters. Thus far, polling shows that the public believes Jansa.

15. (C) Comment: Although the scandal could be expected to hurt Jansa's chances September 21, that might not be the case - if no hard evidence comes to light. Slovenia remains a country where politics is personal; Slovenes will vote for the person, not the party. So if Jansa comes out looking like the victim of a baseless attack, he, and SDS, might get a big boost. On the other hand, if the public starts to feel there is some truth to the story, the opposition Social Democrats could win big. At this point, it is still too early to tell.
GHAFARI